

The Art of Story Telling

Julia Darrow Cowles

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THE ART OF STORY-TELLING

BOOKS BY
JULIA DARROW COWLES

Art of Story-Telling, The
Children of Mother Goose, The
Children's Story Hour, The
Child's Own Fairy Book, The
Fairy Tales of Long Ago
Favorite Folk Tales
Favorite Tales for Story-
Telling
Going to School in Animal
Land
Indian Nature Myths
Myths From Many Lands
Once Upon A Time Stories
Queer Little Tailor, The
Robinson Crusoe Reader, The
Stories to Tell
Twilight Folk Tales

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THE ART OF STORY-TELLING

BY

JULIA DARROW COWLES

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PREFACE

In preparing this book the author has sought to awaken a keener perception and a higher appreciation of the artistic and ethical value of story-telling; to simplify some of its problems; and to emphasize the true delight which the story-teller may share with her hearers.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Miss Mabel Bartleson, children's librarian, and to Miss Ida May Ferguson, of the children's department of the Minneapolis Public Library, for their thoughtful and valuable assistance.

• J. D. C.

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“The Word Painter is the Greatest Human Artist”

The Art of Story-Telling

CHAPTER I

Story-Telling in the Home

THE home, the school, and the library have each a distinct purpose in story-telling. These purposes may be more or less complex, they may in some instances coincide, yet the fields are separate, and each has its own fundamental reason for presenting the oral story to the child.

In the home, the chief object in story-telling is to give content, to satisfy. The child, becoming tired of his toys or of his games, comes to his mother and begs for a story. He wants to be taken into her lap, cuddled within her arms, and entertained. Oh, the wonderful, the far-reaching opportunities held by the mother in such moments as these! The child is in a quiet, receptive mood, and the stories told him at such times will never be forgotten; their influence will follow him as long as he lives. Nothing that

he can learn in school in the after years will abide and enter into the essence of his being as will the stories which his mother tells him. Strength of character, purity of life, truthfulness, unselfishness, obedience, faith—all may be made beautiful and attractive by means of stories.

Nor is the directly ethical training the greatest good achieved by story-telling in the home. Nothing else so closely links mother and child in a sweet fellowship and communion of thought. Nothing else so intimately binds them together, nor so fully secures the confidence of the child. When they enter together the enchanted realm of story-land, mother and child are in a region apart, a region from which others are excluded. The companionship of story-land belongs only to congenial souls. And so the mother, by means of stories, becomes the intimate companion, the loving and wise guide, the dearest confidant of her child.

Not all the stories of the home need be ethical in their teaching, though all stories worth telling have a foundation of truth. There should be a wise blending of fairy stories, mythological tales, fables, nonsense

verses, and true nature stories; and the advantage of story-telling is that it may be carried on in connection with many of the household duties, with no diminishing of the story's charm. While the mother sews or embroiders or mends, while she stirs a cake, or washes dishes, she can tell a story which will not only entertain or influence the child, but will carry her own thoughts away from the oftentimes dullness of her task into realms of beauty and delight. Then, too, many a childish task may be robbed of its seemingly tedious character by the telling of a story during its progress, or as a reward when the task is completed.

Let me beg of you, mothers, do not think that you cannot tell stories. Try; try; keep on trying; and ease in telling is bound to come. Do not think of yourself in the telling; think of the story and of the child who listens. Nothing else matters.

It takes time to search out and familiarize oneself with just the stories that are best worth telling, but surely no mother can find a more important or more worthy object upon which to expend the time. Librarians and story-tellers within the past few years have

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prepared lists which make such selection comparatively easy, and classified lists are included in the present volume.

The very little child can grasp only the simplest story, but the essential facts of any story which he can comprehend, can be simply told. A story for a little child should have few characters, little if any plot, and a familiarity of action or place. Mother Goose and similar nursery rhymes naturally come first for little children in the home. The kindergarten collections of stories contain good material, and these can be followed by or interspersed with the simplest myths and fairy tales.

Just as children love the companionship of animals, so do they love stories of animals; and when these animals do the things that children do, an element of surprise and new delight is added. Children intuitively want the right to prevail. They love the old tales wherein animals talk, and the crafty old fox is always beaten by the good little hen.

Bible stories should be told to children day by day. They can be made very simple in outline, but they should be told over and over, with a distinction made between them and

the fables and folk tales. The latter may teach a true lesson, but the former teach *The Truth*. And not only should we tell the Old Testament stories of heroes and of great wonders, but the story of Christ's birth, of his life, his death, and his resurrection, should be made a part of every child's early teaching in the form of stories reverently told. They will make a lasting impression; an impression deeper than the most eloquent sermon heard in maturer years.

A careful choice of the kind of stories told to little children lays not only a sound moral foundation, but a foundation for good literary taste.

A child brought up from its earliest years on stories from the Bible, Anderson, Æsop, Stevenson, and Field, will instinctively detect and reject trash when he begins to read for himself. But the supply of good literature must be kept at hand, for children *will* read *something*.

What sweeter bit of verse can a mother repeat to the child she is hushing to sleep than this:

Sleep, little pigeon, and fold your wings —
Little blue pigeon with velvet eyes;

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Sleep to the singing of motherbird swinging —
Swinging her nest where her little one lies.

In through the window a moonbeam comes —
Little gold moonbeam with misty wings;
All silently creeping, it asks: "Is he sleeping —
Sleeping and dreaming while mother sings?"

The stanzas are from "A Japanese Lullaby," and are selected from a host of similarly dainty verses in *Lullaby Land*, by Eugene Field (Charles Scribner's Sons).

Robert Louis Stevenson's *Child's Garden of Verse* is another storehouse of treasure for mothers. Some of his rhymes, such as "Good and Bad Children," are quite equal to Mother Goose in their good advice administered in quaintly merry form, while his "Foreign Lands" and "My Shadow" teach children to idealize the every-day happenings of the home life.

How could a mother better remind her small boy or girl that it is time to waken than by repeating his lines:

A birdie with a yellow bill
Hopped upon the window-sill,
Cocked his shining eye and said:
"Ain't you 'shamed, you sleepy-head!"

When a mother habitually repeats to her child stories and verses of the character out-

lined, she is not only forming his taste in literature along right lines, but she is helping to enlarge his vocabulary.

“What does ‘embark’ mean, Mamma?” is sure to follow the first or second recital of Stevenson’s “My Bed Is a Boat”:

My bed is like a little boat;
Nurse helps me in when I embark;
She girds me in my sailor coat
And starts me in the dark.

And “gird” will also need interpreting. These words will soon become a part of his normal vocabulary. He may not use them in his everyday speech, but he will not need to have them explained to him when he comes upon them in his later reading. Teachers invariably know when a child comes from a home of culture and of good literary taste, by the foundation already laid. The child’s own forms of expression and the range of his vocabulary are unmistakable evidence of the home influence and teaching.

A literary sequence which will give the child a knowledge of literature as a development or a growth—not as a vast accumulation of unrelated parts—can be carried through his reading and study. This subject

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is taken up in the chapter upon "Systematic Story-Telling," and while it is essentially the work of a teacher, the foundation for it may be laid by the wise mother who starts her child along right lines through the medium of her story-telling.

It has already been said that all stories worth the telling have a foundation of truth. The story with which this chapter closes is a beautiful example of a nature story which embodies a higher truth. It is found in Mrs. Gatty's *Parables from Nature* (The Macmillan Company):

A Lesson of Faith*

A mild, green caterpillar was one day strolling about on a cabbage leaf, when there settled beside her a beautiful Butterfly.

The Butterfly fluttered her wings feebly, and seemed very ill.

"I feel very strange and dizzy," said the Butterfly, addressing the Caterpillar, "and I am sure that I have but a little while to live. But I have just laid some butterfly eggs on this cabbage leaf, and if I die there will be no one to care for my baby butterflies.

* Adapted for telling. By permission of the publishers.

I must hire a nurse for them at once, but I cannot go far to seek for one. May I hire you as nurse, kind Caterpillar? I will pay you with gold dust from my wings."

Then, before the surprised Caterpillar could reply, the Butterfly went on, "Of course you must not feed them on the coarse cabbage leaves which are your food. Young butterflies must be fed upon early dew and the honey of flowers. And at first, oh, good Caterpillar, they must not be allowed to fly far, for their wings will not be strong. It is sad that you cannot fly yourself. But I am sure you will be kind, and will do the best you can."

With that the poor Butterfly drooped her wings and died, and the Caterpillar had no chance to so much as say "Yes," or "No."

"Dear me!" she exclaimed, as she looked at the butterfly eggs beside her, "what sort of a nurse will I make for a group of gay young butterflies? Much attention they will pay to the advice of a plain caterpillar like me. But I shall have to do the best that I can," she added. And all that night she walked around and around the butterfly eggs to see that no harm came to them.

“I wish that I had someone wiser than myself to consult with,” she said to herself next morning. “I might talk it over with the house dog. But, no,” she added hastily, “he is kind, but big and rough, and one brush of his tail would whisk all the eggs off the cabbage leaf.

“There is Tom Cat,” she went on, after thinking a few moments, “but he is lazy and selfish, and he would not give himself the trouble to think about butterfly eggs.

“Ah, but there’s the Lark!” she exclaimed at length. “He flies far up into the heavens and perhaps he knows more than we creatures that live upon the earth. I’ll ask him.”

So the Caterpillar sent a message to the Lark, who lived in a neighboring cornfield, and she told him all her troubles.

“And I want to know how I, a poor crawling Caterpillar, am to feed and care for a family of beautiful young butterflies. Could you find out for me the next time you fly away up into the blue heavens?”

“Perhaps I can,” said the Lark, and off he flew.

Higher and higher he winged his way until the poor, crawling Caterpillar could not even

hear his song, to say nothing of seeing him.

After a very long time—at least it seemed so to the Caterpillar, who, in her odd, lumbering way, kept walking around and around the butterfly eggs—the Lark came back.

First, she could hear his song away up in the heavens. Then it sounded nearer and nearer, till he alighted close beside her and began to speak.

“I found out many wonderful things,” he said. “But if I tell them to you, you will not believe me.”

“Oh, yes I will,” answered the Caterpillar hastily, “I believe everything I am told.”

“Well, then,” said the Lark, “the first thing I found out was that the butterfly eggs will turn into little green caterpillars, just like yourself, and that they will eat cabbage leaves just as you do.”

“Wretch!” exclaimed the Caterpillar, bristling with indignation. “Why do you come and mock me with such a story as that? I thought you would be kind, and would try to help me.”

“So I would,” answered the Lark, “but I told you, you would not believe me,” and with that he flew away to the cornfield.

“Dear me,” said the Caterpillar, sorrowfully. “When the Lark flies so far up into the heavens I should not think he would come back to us poor creatures with such a silly tale. And I needed help so badly.”

“I would help you if you would only believe me,” said the Lark, flying down to the cabbage patch once more. “I have wonderful things to tell you, if you would only have faith in me and trust in what I say.”

“And you are not making fun of me?” asked the Caterpillar.

“Of course not,” answered the Lark.

“But you tell me such impossible things!”

“If you could fly with me and see the wonders that I see, here on earth, and away up in the blue sky, you would not say that *anything* was *impossible*,” replied the Lark.

“But,” said the Caterpillar, “you tell me that these eggs will hatch out into caterpillars, and I *know* that their mother was a butterfly, for I saw her with my own eyes; and so of course they will be butterflies. How could they be anything else? I am sure I can reason that far, if I cannot fly.”

“Very well,” answered the Lark, “then I must leave you, though I have even more

wonderful things that I could tell. But what comes to you from the heavens, you can only receive by faith, as I do. You cannot crawl around on your cabbage leaf and reason these things out."

"Oh, I do believe what I am told," repeated the Caterpillar—although she had just proved that it was not true—"at least," she added, "everything that is *reasonable* to believe. Pray tell me what else you learned."

"I learned," said the Lark, impressively, "that you will be a butterfly, yourself, some day."

"Now, indeed, you are making fun of me," exclaimed the Caterpillar, ready to cry with vexation and disappointment. But just at that moment she felt something brush against her side, and, turning her head, she looked in amazement at the cabbage leaf, for there, just coming out of the butterfly eggs, were eight or ten little green caterpillars—and they were no more than out of the eggs before they began eating the juicy leaf.

Oh, how astonished and how ashamed the Caterpillar felt. What the Lark had said was true!

And then a very wonderful thought came to the poor, green Caterpillar. "If this part is true, it must all be true, and some day *I* shall be a *butterfly*."

She was so delighted that she began telling all her caterpillar friends about it—but they did not believe her any more than she had believed the Lark.

"But I know, I *know*," she kept saying to herself. And she never tired of hearing the Lark sing of the wonders of the earth below, and of the heavens above.

And all the time, the little green caterpillars on the leaf grew and thrived wonderfully, and the big green Caterpillar watched them and cared for them carefully every hour.

One day the Caterpillar's friends gathered around her and said, very sorrowfully, "It is time for you to spin your chrysalis and die."

But the Caterpillar replied, "You mean that I shall soon be changed into a beautiful butterfly. How wonderful it will be."

And her friends looked at one another sadly and said, "She is quite out of her mind."

Then the Caterpillar spun her chrysalis and went to sleep.

And by and by, when she wakened, oh, then she *knew* that what the Lark had learned in the heavens was true — for she was a beautiful butterfly, with gold dust on her wings.

CHAPTER II

Why Tell Stories in School?

EVERY lover of children knows that a good story, well told, is a source of the purest joy; but while this of itself is sufficient reason for story-telling in the home and in the nursery, it is not sufficient reason for general story-telling in the school. Happiness is a powerful ally of successful work, but it never should be substituted for the work itself; it may well be made one of the means of attainment, but never the object to be attained. Useful service is a far higher ideal than personal happiness, and it should be the ideal held before the child who enters school.

As all educational methods have for their ultimate object that of making the child of today the good neighbor, the true friend, the useful citizen of tomorrow, so we have a right to question the recent and growing demand for story-telling in our schools. What is its object? Does this object aid in the ultimate end to be attained?

First of all let us consider the well-recognized fact that through story-telling a teacher may come into so close and happy a relationship with her pupils that they will respond to her suggestions and be molded by her influence to a degree not easily attainable by any other means. A story may be told as a means of restoring order in a roomful of restless children, or when some untoward occurrence has brought the tension of school discipline dangerously near to the breaking point. This use of the timely, the appropriate, story is worthy of consideration by teachers far beyond the primary grades.

— Stories may be used as an aid to language work. The diffident, self-conscious child who cannot be induced to talk upon the ordinary topics of school work, can be aroused into forgetfulness of self and made to respond with growing animation to questions regarding a story that has awakened his interest. A "point of contact" may be established with even the dullest child if his interests are studied and the right story chosen for telling. Sometimes the story may need to be improvised to fit the occasion. A story chosen, or especially written to meet the need of some

particular child, has in more than one instance influenced his whole after life.

* Lessons of unselfishness, of thoughtfulness, of cleanliness, of patriotism, of obedience—of all the characteristics which we wish to cultivate in the children—may be impressed by means of stories. This field of story-telling should begin in the home, but it may well extend on into the school room.

* A love of nature and of outdoor life may be strengthened by stories of birds and animals, of trees and of plant life, thus leading naturally to essays and poems upon the same subjects for later reading.

The funny story has its legitimate place in the school room, although there are teachers who would as soon think of introducing a bit of fun into a church service as into a school session. But fun is a wonderful lubricant, and there are times when a funny story will oil up the pedagogical machinery as nothing else could.

* In the more advanced grades stories may be used to awaken an interest in history, both local and general, ancient and modern. Nothing better can be devised for making the dry bones of names and dates take on life, than

the telling of an interesting story of the time and the characters of the lesson. Such stories should not be told as an end in themselves, but as a means to an end—the awakening of interest in historical subjects by giving life and reality to historical characters. ✕

In the same manner an interest in the works of the best authors may be aroused by telling the story of one character in a book, or by telling part of the story of a book and leaving it at an interesting point. There are many children, boys especially, who leave school after passing through the seventh or eighth grade. If they have not formed a taste for good literature, their reading after leaving school is likely to be without value if it is not positively injurious. One of the surest means of leading such boys to read and enjoy good books lies in the hands of the teachers of these grades. Let her tell stories from Dickens, from Scott, from Cooper, from Stevenson; let her tell stories from local history, general history; stories of discovery, of science, and of art. Let her make these things attractive, and show her pupils where more of the same fascinating material may be found.

So thoroughly is the value of this class of story-telling understood that progressive librarians throughout the country are having "story hours" at the libraries for the purpose of reaching boys of this age and bringing them into closer touch with the treasures of the library shelves. Teachers in districts having any large percentage of boys of this class can accomplish far-reaching results by devoting some portion of each week, at least, to telling stories having this special end in view.

With the foregoing objects—a sympathetic understanding between teacher and pupils, better discipline, help for the self-conscious and the "dull" pupil, character lessons, the development of a love of nature, an interest in history and in good literature—all attainable through story-telling, there remains little ground for question as to the work coinciding in its results with the ultimate object of our common school education. But let the teacher have a definite object in her story-telling. Let her use this new-old art as a means of arousing her pupils to action, to achievement. A story told in school should not be offered as a sugary, educa-

tional confection which will destroy the taste for solid food, but as a spicy condiment to whet the appetite for a substantial feast.

The well told story arouses the child's curiosity, cultivates and directs his imagination, stimulates his natural love of action, and brings keen joy to his soul.

For these reasons story-telling should occupy a very prominent place, especially in the primary and intermediate grades. Particularly the story is finding great favor with the educator as a very potent instrument to teach the child to talk and to read. It is very easy to secure the child's interest in a good story, and his progress in reading will be rapid because he is interested in the things about which he is reading.

Geography, history, and the other subjects take on new life and meaning when they are taught by a teacher who knows how to make judicious use of the good story.

CHAPTER III

How to Choose Stories for Telling

THERE are certain subtle qualities which a story must possess in order to give pleasure through its telling, which are not necessary in the story which is to be read. These qualities are of form rather than of substance. They are those qualities which permit of the personality of the speaker entering into the narrative to such an extent that the story becomes a recounting of something *known to her*. No matter how remote in point of time or place, the story must be of a character which can be personally set forth. I do not mean by this that the one who tells the story should be thrown into the foreground, or that there should be any use of the pronoun "I"; but simply that the teller of the story should be able to set it forth with all the earnestness and intimacy of a personal narrative, and the story itself must therefore possess the form which makes this possible.

A story of this character may be so told to a roomful of small children that it will hold them breathless with interest even at the close of a hard day's work, and *when the dismissal bell is ringing*, as the writer has inadvertently proved.

To some, the story that is adapted in substance and in form for telling, makes instant appeal. Its possibilities are intuitively recognized. To others, only a critical examination and analysis will show whether the story is one to which children will listen with delight. Of course, after all is said and done, the true test of the story lies in telling it.

What, then, are the essential requirements in the form of the story?

The story must begin in an interesting way. The first sentence, or at most the first paragraph, should locate the story and introduce its hero. To be sure the "location" may be that delightfully indefinite past from which so many of childhood's stories emanate—the "Once upon a time" of the fairy tale or of the "little small Rid Hin"; or it may be "many years ago"; or "in ancient times," as in the story of "Why the Cat and Dog Are Enemies"; or simply "once"—"There

was once a shepherd boy who called ‘ Wolf,’ ” or “ The Sun and the Wind once had a quarrel.”

Of course the time may, on the other hand, be very definite — “ ’Twas the night before Christmas ” — but in either case the story starts out positively, the place or time is assigned, the subject of the story is introduced. Then you will see the children, their expectation aroused, settle themselves for the delightful developments which are to be unfolded, for the denouement which is sure to follow, and their eager faces are all the incentive needed to arouse the story-teller to her best endeavor.

The story, properly introduced, should move forward clearly, somewhat concisely, toward a well-defined end or climax. The form should be mainly narrative or conversational, with vivid touches of description never prolonged. There should be life, action, dramatic action, but very little of explanation. The incidents of the story should be so arranged as to be self-explanatory in their sequence.

For small children, repetition has a special charm — repetition such as is to be found in

“The Three Bears,” or “The Cock and the Mouse.”

For older children there may be introduced a little more of the descriptive form, but it is well to beware of adding much of either description or explanation. Even “grown-ups” enjoy the straightforward narrative that delights the child, and the introduction of detail soon grows irksome and uninteresting, even to the most conscientious listener. And no child is a “conscientious listener.” He listens for love of the story. If it does not interest him he stops listening and does something else.

The story must reach a climax and stop there. Many a good story has been spoiled by its ending. Story-tellers sometimes remind one of a man holding the handles of an electric battery. The current is so strong that he cannot let go. The story-teller must know when and how to “let go.” Let us suppose that, in telling Hans Christian Andersen’s story of “The Nightingale,” the story-teller—after the delightful denouement of the supposedly dead Emperor’s greeting to his attendants, where he “to their astonishment said ‘Good morning!’”—

were to add an explanation of the effect of the nightingale's song in restoring the Emperor to health! It would be like offering a glass of "plain soda" from which all the effervescence had departed.

Bring the story to its self-wrought denouement and—let go. Do not apologize for the ending, do not explain it, do not tack on a moral—just "let go," and you will leave all the tingle and exhilaration of the magnetic current still in the veins of your listeners.

So much for the structural form of the story. Next let us consider its

Point of Contact

Has the story something which is in common with the life and experience of the listeners? Has it a familiar groundwork? Does it deal with familiar objects or actions? In other words, is it "understandable" from the child's point of view? Not that all the characters nor all the adjustments of the story need to be those which the child already knows by experience, but there must be some common ground from which a start may be made. Then the story may lead on into wonderful regions of fancy or into remote times

and places which only the imagination can trace. For instance, of what value or interest would the story of "Toads and Diamonds" be to a child who never had seen a toad and who had no knowledge of what a diamond was like? And does not the boy's understanding of "How Thor Went Fishing" lie in the fact that *he* has fished?

Little children love to be told stories of the life which they know by daily contact; stories of the home and of the home industries, of school, of children, of pets and animals. They live in "a daily fellowship with nature and all creatures." Fairy tales and stories of animals are doubly delightful when the fairies and the animals do the things which children do. This does not imply that the story be commonplace, for the normal activities of children are far removed from the commonplace, and the story, having its point of contact established, should, through its imaginative or its moral influence, carry the child into quite unexplored regions of beauty and truth.

This leads us to another determining factor—the determining factor—in choosing a story.

Is It Worth Telling?

The structural form of a story may be changed; with more difficulty a point of contact may be established by a bit of suggestive explanation, but if the story content is not good, no amount of "doctoring" will make it worth the telling.

Suppose we apply these tests: Is the effect of the story helpful? Does it strengthen the imagination? Does it teach a right principle of action? Does it inspire a love for the beautiful and the true? Does it inspire reverence for the Creator and appreciation of the works of His hand? Does it exemplify sane and happy living? Does it teach neighborly kindness? Will its telling make a child better and happier? If the story calls for an affirmative answer to any of these questions, if, in other words, its teaching is simple, pure, and true, then it is by all means worthy of telling.

It is not necessary that the story should make no mention of selfishness, of craftiness, of evil temper, or of disobedience to laws moral or physical; but no story in which evil is rewarded or in which the wrongdoer tri-

umphs should ever be told to children, for in its essence such a story is not true, its teaching is not true; it is not in accord with God's eternal laws. Children assimilate long before they analyze.

At first glance it may seem easy to decide as to the moral influence of a story, but there are differences of opinion even here, and some writers condemn unsparingly that old acquaintance of our childhood, Jack, of Beanstalk fame, and set him down as an arrant thief and murderer whose crimes brought him riches and comfort in his old age. And the tale of Cinderella, while it can be said to cast no stain upon the character of its heroine, is condemned as leaving an impression, upon the impressionable mind of childhood, that all step-mothers are hard and cruel and unjust. As the Mother Goose stories are dealt with at greater length in a later chapter, I will make no comment now upon these criticisms. But they are worthy of due consideration, and go to show that it is not always as easy as it may at first appear, to judge the exact influence of a story, and some of our old acquaintances which have been accepted simply because they are old ac-

quaintances, may really need to be given the "cut direct."

This much is safe to say: If you have any doubts about the influence of a story being wholly good, leave it untold. There are so many good stories, so many whose teaching is wholly and positively helpful, that there is no need of hesitating over one which presents a doubt.

There is one more qualification which should be required of the story told to children. It should be written in

✓ *Good Literary Form*

Since one of the objects of story-telling is to cultivate a taste for good literature, the story chosen should not only be tellable in its form and true in its essence, but it should be artistic in its workmanship. It should be written in pure, simple English, fitted to the thought expressed. But, it may be objected, few story-tellers ever give a story in the exact language in which it is written. This is true, for if the story is learned word for word, the narrator is very apt to give a recitation, rather than to tell a story. At the same time the true story-teller will learn

her story so thoroughly, will become so at home in every essential detail, that the spirit and style of the writer will be assimilated and so bound up with the story itself that the literary qualities will be retained and their essence imparted to the orally reproduced story. So, only, can appreciation and love for the beauty of literary forms be imparted to the children by means of the verbal story. Herein lies the *art* of the story-teller.

CHAPTER IV

The Telling of the Story

HAVING chosen the right story for telling, the next consideration is how to tell it in the best manner possible.

Aside from all question of voice, enunciation, ease of manner—which, though important, are more or less matters of personal habit or physical endowment—there are two absolute essentials to successful story-telling: a thorough knowledge of the story, and forgetfulness of self.

The best story may be spoiled by the manner of telling. A good story told by a master of the art will be a source of delight, while the same story told by a self-conscious, poorly prepared novice will be annoyingly tiresome.

The first step in the preparation, then, must be a thorough assimilation of the story. This does not involve memorizing, but the substance of the story must be made your own. Formulate in your own mind its plan

or outline. What is its climax? What are the essential facts leading to this climax? How do they follow, in order to bring about the final surprise or culmination?

Having this outline well fixed in mind, begin to fill in details. Note the bits of wit or of wisdom which strengthen the story; the apt phrases or happy turns of expression which exactly fit the thought. Memorize these, and these only. Think the story over, again and again, until it becomes a personal possession—something which you *know*. Then begin formulating it. You can do this mentally, inaudibly at first, following the general mode of expression of the written story, so that you will tell it in a manner which conforms to the literary style of the author. This is not difficult, for if you have selected a well-written story, the style in which it is written will be in keeping with its character and will seem the natural mode of expression. This assimilation of style as well as of substance takes the place of literal memorizing. It allows full liberty in the telling, while memorizing only cramps and hampers.

Repeat the story mentally until you not only know its substance as a personal experi-

ence, but until you are so familiar with its literary style that you could scarcely tell that particular story in any other form. This assimilation of style as well as of substance takes time, but the ability to learn a story readily will come with practice. After you have mastered the *method* of learning, you will be able to acquire new stories with little difficulty.

You are now ready to tell the story orally; not at once to an audience—at least not until you have gained sufficient experience to know to just what extent you can depend upon yourself—but to an imaginary assembly. A doll makes a very good “practice auditor,” and is not inclined to encourage you overmuch by her responsiveness. If your imagination is good, a sofa pillow or a chair will do as well. You will probably make your first audible effort at an opportune moment when you are left quite alone in the house, and the first opening door will bring the rehearsal to a definite close. But in time, if you persevere, the family will become used to it. As for yourself, however, you will probably find that an amused audience of one, even though unseen, is more conducive to self-conscious-

ness than an interested audience of one hundred.

A teacher presenting a story to her own class of pupils will not, of course, have so many difficulties to overcome. She and the children are on a familiar footing; she talks to them every day; she knows the number and responsiveness of her audience, the size of the room, the carrying power of her own voice. She is scarcely conscious that these factors enter into the success of story-telling. But when a story-teller addresses an unknown audience, these factors assume unexpected importance.

I have in mind an early experience when a story hour was arranged at one of the branch libraries of a large city. I knew that the "fifty-seven varieties" of childhood were accustomed to assemble there and that the room was not large, but I was not prepared to find two hundred children compressed within little more than two hundred square feet of space. My natural voice proved wholly inadequate. I began, but saw at once that the children at the farther end of the room could not hear, and I stopped. Taking a more central position, I found an entirely

new voice — one so much higher pitched that I am sure I should never have recognized it as my own, elsewhere — and I told the stories. The new voice carried, and under the conditions sounded wholly normal. The children grew quiet, and for nearly an hour we traveled together through fairy-land, across western prairies, along the streets of Hamelin town, into the Empire of Japan, and among the Korean folk. How we did enjoy it!

The incident taught me two things at least: one, the value of having an intimate knowledge of the stories to be told, so that no unexpectedness of conditions could cause them to take flight; the other, the necessity of being able to adapt oneself to unexpected conditions.

The need of adapting the story, or the mode of telling, to the requirements of the immediate occasion, can only be learned by watching your audience.

Be sure your voice reaches the farthest child in the room. You need not use a loud tone, but a little difference in the pitch will make a great difference in the carrying quality. If the children must exert themselves, hold themselves tense, in order to hear, they

will soon relax the effort and become restless and indifferent.

If a child becomes inattentive, address your story to him for a time, and turn to him frequently afterward. Each child loves to feel that the story is being told to *him*. For this reason, the story and the children are the only things to be taken account of. The story should be told directly to the *individual* children, not to the *mass* of children.

At a recent story hour the children were grouped upon the left hand side of the large audience room, and the older people, of whom there were a goodly number, upon the right hand side. A small cousin of the story-teller—aged three—who had heard the stories until he could tell them himself, sat upon his grandfather's lap on the "grown-up" side of the room.

The story-teller devoted her attention to the children's side of the room exclusively. She began with the story of "Raggylug," by Ernest Thompson-Seton. The moment the story was finished, a small voice from the neglected side of the room demanded, "Now tell it to *me!*"

The incident is used to show that each

child wants to feel that the story is being told to him, and emphasizes the need of telling stories with a personal directness of appeal.

I have said that the story and the children should be the only things of which the storyteller takes note. A consciousness of one's own self as the actor upon the boards, spoils all.

This self-consciousness may be betrayed by a nervous twirling of a handkerchief, a twisting of rings or bracelet, by an arranging of the hair or the dress. It may be but a slight action in itself, but it betrays the fault which will be felt, though probably not defined.

Forget yourself. Become so interested in your story that you can think of nothing else—except the children who are drinking it in.

You may safely use as much dramatic action as springs spontaneously from a vivid telling of the story, but it must never be a conscious effort for dramatic effect. Give yourself perfect liberty. As you watch your audience, interpolate, enlarge, omit, explain briefly, as you see the need arise—but you can only do this if you *know* your story. The

changes made should all be kept in harmony with the style of the original narrative, and used only in order to stimulate or to arouse your hearers to a quicker perception or a better understanding.

Take time to bring out the essence of the tale, to impress the beauty of the description, to enhance the humor of a situation. A story should never be hurriedly told, any more than it should be hurriedly prepared.

It is quite possible for the same story to be so told as to teach exactly opposite lessons, and yet without any alteration of the essential facts. This point is well illustrated by the story of "Robin Hood and Sir Richard-at-the-Lea," taken as an example. In this story it would be easy to call undue attention to Robin Hood as the "robber outlaw." On the other hand, it is equally easy, by a few wise omissions, or a difference in handling, to make prominent the characteristics which caused him to be loved by all his "merrie men," trusted by the poor and helpless, and worshipped as a hero by the boys of all succeeding generations. This difference in handling applies to nearly all of the Robin Hood stories, and to many of the old nursery tales

as well. They illustrate the point which I have made, that the same story may be so written, or so told, as to leave entirely different impressions upon the mind.

The story-teller may not as a rule require special training in the use of the speaking voice, but it is essential that she enunciate easily, clearly, and agreeably. A well modulated voice tires neither speaker nor hearer.

To summarize—

Know your story; know it so thoroughly that it is flexible under your handling, yielding easily to the varying conditions under which it is told while retaining all its essential qualities of style and of substance:

See that your voice carries:

Forget yourself:

Do not hurry:

Bring out the true essence of the tale:

Tell it with directness of appeal to your immediate audience:

Carry it to its climax:

“Let go.”

CHAPTER V

Use of the Story in Primary Grades

IN the primary grades of the schools, stories may be told as a relaxation, as an incentive to learning to read, and as a means of enlarging the vocabulary of the little people and thereby giving them greater freedom of self-expression. In the more advanced grades the story is used to awaken interest in new subjects, to fix the essentials of a lesson, and to cultivate a taste for the best in literature. But in all the grades, as well as in the home, it may be made the means of carrying home a lesson or of clinching a truth.

The use of the story in the primary grades coincides in some degree with its use in the home, but it goes much further. The old method of primary teaching whereby a child was made by laborious exercises to *learn to read* in order that he might be able in later years to enjoy the treasures of literature, has undergone a radical and healthful change.

Under the former method, the child, through the barrenness of his labor, was often discouraged in his attempt to master reading, and he had but a dim idea at best of the benefit which was to accrue to him from learning.

Under present methods, the child, before he is given any of the laborious drill work—which is as essential as ever to his learning to read for himself—is told stories, is led into the beautiful realms of literature, and is made to realize what is in store for him when he has mastered the technical difficulties of reading. After that, the drills and the oral stories are carried on together, and the stories form a tempting incentive to hard work upon the drills. Children are willing to work, and to work hard, if they see a desirable object to be attained.

The primary teacher who makes judicious use of stories in her class room lays hold upon one of the most efficient aids to successful work. But when a story has been told to the children, it has but half served its purpose. If it was worth telling, it is worth remembering; and there is no means by which the story may be so thoroughly

impressed upon the child's mind as by his telling it himself.

The first advantage gained lies in the fact that if the child knows that he is likely to be called upon to re-tell the story, he will listen more intently, more acutely. This in itself helps him, because he learns to be attentive, and to concentrate his thoughts. When he tries to re-tell the story, if he has not grasped the essentials or cannot follow the sequence, then he will have to listen again—more carefully, this time—and he will have shown wherein he needs help.

With very young children, it is a good plan to talk the story over, after it has been told, bringing out the essential facts, and so forming a framework or outline upon which the child can more readily rebuild the story.

The opportunity which the reproduction of a story affords of helping the child to express himself in clear, correct English, and to enlarge his vocabulary, is of exceptional value. At the same time his absorption in the story itself overcomes his timidity or self-consciousness to a wonderful degree, and often arouses a child from a dull lethargy of indifference.

Again, no reading lesson will admit of the freedom of expression in face, tone, and general attitude which the telling of a story permits. Why? Because the child enjoys it. It is a natural thing to him, while reading, in the early grades, is unnatural.

Teachers should be careful not to let the children who are eager to re-tell the story, monopolize the time. It is those who are shy and backward who need the exercise most. The eager ones may lead the way, but the shy ones should be encouraged to follow.

Dramatization goes a step farther than reproduction. The dramatizing or playing of a story makes it take on life and reality for the child. When he hears a story read or told he forms a mental picture which is more or less hazy and easily dispelled. When he has for himself played the story, assumed one of the characters, and acted its part, then the thought of the story becomes crystallized. He grasps its meaning, sees its beauty, understands its truth, and *remembers* it. This intensifying of his mental pictures results in more expressive reading as well as in better language work and in greater power of self-expression.

Another distinct advantage gained through dramatizing is the bringing of the life of literature into direct contact with the child's life, and so causing all literature to become more real and vital.

The play—for so it seems to the child—forms a connecting link between the home or play-life to which he has been accustomed, and the new and strange life of the school. It helps to banish diffidence, and to establish a familiar atmosphere and a spirit of fellowship with the teacher and the other pupils. It is also a source of pure joy to the child, and “the education that brings joy along with careful and exact training is better than the kind that omits the joy.” Would that every teacher might remember this!

It need hardly be said that while dramatizing in the schoolroom may be helpful and vitalizing when under the control of a teacher who recognizes its educational value, it may, on the other hand, become inane and even silly if used simply as an amusement or as a time-filler.

While much of the value of dramatizing must depend upon the insight and oversight of the teacher, much also depends upon the

selection of material. "Not what *may* be dramatized, but what *should* be."

If a teacher has clearly before her the thought of *why* we dramatize, then the question of *what* to dramatize will be more readily determined.

Stories of nature, in which the children represent birds, bees, flowers, the wind, the seasons, are all useful for the purpose. Such stories quicken the imagination and bring the child into closer relationship with outdoor life.

An especially good example of a story to dramatize is the "Lesson of Faith," in the first chapter of this book. Teachers will find this story especially appropriate to their Easter exercises.

After the story has been told often enough for the children to become familiar with its thought and outline, let some little girl represent the Caterpillar, and another the Butterfly. Have a boy represent the Lark, and eight or ten other children the butterfly eggs.

Begin the dramatizing by having this last group of children curl themselves down quietly together, while the little girl who represents the Caterpillar moves slowly about

near them. Then let the Butterfly, slowly moving her wings, settle beside the Caterpillar and address her, telling her of the little eggs, and asking her to care for them. Then have the Butterfly droop her wings and become quiet, as though dead. It is best, then, to allow this child to resume her seat while the others carry on the little play.

Next have the Caterpillar indulge in her soliloquy, and presently the Lark should come flying to her side. Then follows the dialogue between the two, the Lark flying away and returning as described in the story.

As the Caterpillar declares that the Lark is making fun of her when he tells her that she will one day be a butterfly herself, have the little butterfly eggs—now caterpillars—begin to move about, one brushing against her, and let them begin to nibble as though eating.

After the Caterpillar has shown her great surprise, have her show her great joy at learning that the Lark's message is true. Then she should go to one or two of the children in the seats, who represent the Caterpillar's friends, and tell them the great good news which she has learned.

They are to show their unbelief of what she has said.

Next have these friends come to her and tell her that it is time for her to form her chrysalis and die.

Then the Caterpillar becomes very still, the little green caterpillars, meanwhile, eating and moving about very quietly.

As the final act of the little drama, have the Butterfly emerge from her chrysalis, spread her wings, and fly away.

This story answers perfectly to the requirements of dramatization, and it is clearly not one which *may* be dramatized, but one which *should* be. The children who take part, and those who look on at the little play, will have their mental conception of the story, which was first given in words only, intensified; made real and lasting.

When children imitate, say, the robin or the crow, see that their motions accord with those of the bird represented—have them hop like the robin, or walk like the crow. The eagle and the swallow fly poised on outstretched wing, while the humming bird's wings move rapidly. All these differences, if noted, teach the children to observe. If

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a child makes a mistake, such as hopping when representing the crow, do not tell him what his mistake is, but have him find out before the next day how the crow moves when on the ground. This is of especial value if he can have an opportunity of watching a crow for himself, since it teaches him to observe closely; to use his own eyes.

Fairy and folk tales afford excellent material for dramatizing, as do some of the familiar mythological stories. They quicken the child's imagination by helping him to understand the personification of the forces of nature, and this understanding is greatly helped if he not only hears and reads the stories, but plays them as well.

The story of Midas is well adapted for dramatizing. Choose a boy to represent the avaricious king, and another boy for Bacchus, who bestows upon him the golden touch. Other children, either boys or girls, may be selected to typify the apple tree and the rose bush—moving their leaves in the breeze till stiffened by Midas' touch. A little girl must, of course, personify Midas' little daughter.

After all these have been turned to gold, Midas visits Bacchus and implores his aid

in getting rid of the fatal power which has been given to him. Then he returns with joy and restores the apple tree, the rose, and, best of all, his own little daughter, to life. The details of the story will have to be worked out according to the version chosen, but the story is too well known and too readily found, to make it worth while to give it in detail here.

The reproduction of a story also through constructive mediums — clay modeling, painting, or paper cutting — helps the child to a physical application of the knowledge which he has gained, and so strengthens the impression which has been made.

A little further on, when lessons in nature study, geography, and history are about to be introduced, the child can be led into them almost unconsciously, through talks and stories of nature, of travel, of foreign countries, and of biography and history. Under this method of teaching, children are made to realize that history is a narrative of real events, directed by people who did great things, great enough for the whole country or the whole world to be interested in, and the men of history become heroes of flesh and blood; geography steps out from between

the covers of a book and becomes a multiplied home, the home of many people and of many races, each home possessing characteristics which interest and appeal to the child; nature study becomes an introduction to new friends clothed in feathers and fur.

When stories are reproduced in the school room the work should not be undertaken as a formal language drill. The story should be left to make its appeal to the childish imagination and should then be expressed in his own words. Let the exact drill upon words be done with sentences which are designed for that purpose, but let the reproduction of any story which is worthy of a place in literature be a spontaneous expression upon the part of the child, so that the life and beauty of the story may be preserved to him. A story loses its grace and its ethical value when hammered into a rigid form of words. Word drill is right and proper in its place, but the reproduction of a worth-while story demands that the thought be kept living and active, and the form of expression free.

CHAPTER VI

Jingles, Fables, and Folk-Lore

THE first stories told to a child are almost invariably the Mother Goose rhymes and jingles, beginning perhaps with:

Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man!
So I will, master, as fast as I can:
Pat it, and prick it, and mark it with T,
And toss in the oven for Tommy and me.

Or this, from the *Chinese Mother Goose* (Fleming H. Revell Company):

Pat, pat,
A swallow's nest we'll make,
And if we pat some money out
We'll buy ourselves a cake.

These are usually accompanied by appropriate finger plays.

Can we give a tangible reason for this choice? Why do all mothers turn to them with unwavering fidelity? Why do all children love them?

There can be but one answer. Before a child is able to follow the thread of the sim-

plest story, he can enjoy the musical cadence of these rhymes. There is rhythm in their measure, an allurements of sound in their words and phrases which pleases his ear and satisfies his senses long before their words carry any intelligent thought to his mind.

Why are "memory gems" taught in the primary grades of the schools? The children understand but little of their true beauty of thought, but the cadence of the lines fixes them in the memory, and the deeper meaning comes with later years.

It is because this is so, because the children love musical cadence before they understand words, that mothers can follow or mingle the Mother Goose melodies with more modern verses such as those of Field or Stevenson. The little child will love such lines as these, by Henry van Dyke:

I guess the pussy-willows now
Are creeping out on every bough
Along the brook; and robins look
For early worms behind the plough.

Or the introduction to "The Fountain," in James Russell Lowell's *Poems* (Houghton, Mifflin Company):

Into the sunshine,
Full of the light,
Leaping and flashing
From morn till night.

Into the moonlight,
Whiter than snow,
Waving so flower-like
When the winds blow.

Into the star-light
Rushing in spray,
Happy at midnight,
Happy by day.

The true poetry of these lines will not appeal to him in the beginning, but the cadence of the lines will, and they will become fixed in his mind. The beauty of the poems will be his in later years.

As soon as a child is old enough to follow the thread of a simple story, fables and folklore will lead him into the realm of the world's earliest literature. These are the stories which delighted the race in its childhood, and they have delighted childhood in all succeeding generations. These old fables are so familiar that they are incorporated into our everyday conversation. How often do we refer to "The Hare and the Tortoise," to the "Dog in the Manger," or to "The Goose That Laid the Golden Egg?" How

frequently do we illustrate a point by a reference to "Sour Grapes," or to "A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing?" Yet probably not one in twenty knows that all these familiar illustrations find their origin in the fables of Aesop or La Fontaine.

These old classic fables are a part of the literature "which the world has chosen to remember." They have become a part of the literary coin of the realm. In his introduction to Aesop's Fables, Joseph Jacobs says: "In their grotesque grace, in their quaint humor, in their trust in the simpler virtues, in their insight into the cruder vices, in their innocence of the fact of sex, Aesop's Fables are as little children." As an example:

It happened that a fisher, after fishing all day, caught only a little fish. "Pray, let me go, master," said the fish. "I am much too small for your eating just now. If you put me back into the river I shall soon grow, then you can make a fine meal off me."

"Nay, nay, my little fish," said the fisher, "I have you now. I may not catch you hereafter."

It has been well said that the fables are the child's best introduction to the study of human nature. They are "an interpretation of life." That animals are made to talk, and to exhibit human traits, only adds to the

charm of the story without lessening its ethical value. The child applies to all nature his own standard of ethics.

The child's ability to understand is far in advance of his ability to read, and the old folk-tales which have been handed down orally from generation to generation, and later gathered into volumes for the children of all nations to enjoy together, are a veritable mine of delight to both story-teller and listener.

Folk tales and fairy tales are so interwoven that it is difficult to separate them. That some of both are open to criticism is conceded, but with such abundance of supply there is no need of telling a story which presents even a doubt as to its value.

In her introduction to "The Story Hour," Kate Douglas Wiggin says: "Some universal spiritual truth underlies the really fine old fairy tale; but there can be no educational influence in the so-called fairy stories, which are merely jumbles of impossible incidents, and which not infrequently present dishonesty, deceit, and cruelty in attractive or amusing guise." Here we have the true test which anyone may apply: an underlying

“universal spiritual truth.” Does our story contain such?

Two very familiar nursery tales which owe their origin to the folk-lore of old—namely, “Jack, the Giant Killer,” and “Cinderella”—have recently been brought into question upon the ground of their moral teaching. The critics in question look upon Jack as a thief and a murderer, who “lived happily ever after” upon his ill-gotten gains. For my own part, I find less to condemn in Jack’s treatment of the Giant, than in making a hero of a boy who was lazy and disobedient. The Giant had robbed and killed Jack’s father, and he was wicked and cruel to all, and Jack could scarcely be blamed for trying to regain his father’s stolen wealth, or for cutting down the bean-stalk when the Giant was descending for the purpose of killing him and, in all probability, his mother. But the false note in the story, to my mind, lies in selecting a boy who was avowedly lazy, idle, disobedient, and neglectful of his mother, for the hero of a tale of such marvelous deeds. The tale of Jack, the Giant Killer, however, has many versions, and there is no need whatever, when telling the story, of giv-

ing to Jack any of these undesirable traits. Rather, picture him as a boy capable of performing heroic deeds. The change is easily made.

On the other hand, I would champion the story of "Cinderella." The recent criticism brought against this story is that it leads boys and girls to believe that all step-mothers are cruel. I do not think so. The stories of "The Babes in the Woods," and of "The Princes in the Tower," do not teach that all uncles are cruel. Of course the fact that Cinderella's step-mother was a *step*-mother might be so emphasized in the telling as to give this impression, but it is not emphasized in the story—not, at least, in most of the versions which I have read. Selfishness and pride are set forth in the half-sisters in all their unattractiveness; while Cinderella's final triumph serves as a means of showing her gentle and forgiving nature. These are the points to be brought out in the story-telling, and it would seem to me to be an unjustifiable robbery to take the story of Cinderella from the child's early store of fairy tales. What a thrill of exquisite delight is felt by the child when the magic of the god-

mother's wand turns Cinderella's rags into the robe of a princess and she is whirled away in her golden chariot to meet the prince. It is a story of goodness rewarded and of evil punished, but all in such a magical and wonderful way! I can feel the early thrill of it yet—and so can you.

There are different versions of both these stories, and it is not a difficult matter to tell either one in such a way as to do away with all objectionable features. As was shown in a previous chapter, much of the impression which a story leaves is due to the manner of its telling. The story of Cinderella certainly contains the "underlying universal, spiritual truth," and so answers to the test of a truly "fine old fairy tale."

American story tellers should not go far afield for their tales of folk lore, and overlook the two distinctive sources afforded by our own country. The stories of the North American Indian, told by camp fire or in tepee, are full of poetic imagery, of symbolic truth, and of heroic valor. They form the original legendary lore of our land, and they should be told to the children, preparing them for a later reading of the poets and authors who

have shown us the picturesque as well as the tragic side of the history of the Red Man.

The other American source of folk lore tales is found in the south, and is typified at its best in "Uncle Remus," though not confined to him. As has been said, the dialect story is difficult for a child to read, and Uncle Remus is undoubtedly most thoroughly appreciated by children of a larger growth. But no child can resist the drollery or the rollicking fun of the true darkey story when it is *told* to him.

The following story of "Ithenthiela" which closes this chapter is a good example of the folk lore tales of the Indian. Only a portion of the original story is here given, but it is to be found, with other good stories for telling, in *Tales of the Red Children*, by Abbie F. Brown, and James M. Bell (D. Appleton and Company).

"The Story of Ithenthiela" *

Many years ago there was a brave Indian boy named Ithenthiela, the Caribou-Footed, who lived far away in the great northwest.

One day, as Ithenthiela went through the

* Adapted for telling. By permission of the publishers.

woods, he saw a squirrel in the branches of a tall red spruce tree, and, raising his bow, he shot an arrow at it. Down fell the squirrel, but the arrow lodged in the branches.

Then Ithenthiela started to climb after the arrow, but he had not climbed far when he heard a great pack of wolves howling at the foot of the tree. So he climbed higher, and as he mounted, the arrow went up, too.

Up, up, it went, until at last it came to the sky itself. The arrow passed through the thin blue, and Ithenthiela wriggled after it.

Great was Ithenthiela's surprise when he entered the Sky Country; it was so different from what he had expected. He had imagined a glorious country where the sun always shone, and where huge herds of musk-oxen, caribou, and moose roamed at large. He had expected to find many of his own people camped in wigwams here and there, preparing to fight with other tribes. But instead, the air was damp, dreary, and cold; no trees or flowers grew; no herds of animals ran on the silent plains; the smoke of no wigwam greeted his anxious eyes; no war-whoop or hunting cry was heard. But far in the distance against the sky shimmered a great

white mass, like a pile of snow when the sun shines upon it in the early summer. Toward this great white wonder ran a winding path from the very spot where Ithenthiela stood.

“I will follow it,” thought he, “and see what I find in that shining wigwam over there.”

As he passed along he met an old woman who said to him: “Who are you, and where are you going?”

“I have come from far,” said Ithenthiela. “I am the Caribou-Footed. Can you tell me who lives over there in that big white wigwam?”

“Ah,” said Capoteka—for that was the old woman’s name—“I know you, Ithenthiela! Long have I known that sometime you would come here. But you have done wrong; this is no country for man. In that great wigwam over there lives Itakempka; and he is unhappy because he has lost his great medicine belt. Until he gets it again, no one will be happy in the Sky Country. The belt is at the tepee of the two blind women who live far beyond the wigwam which shines so white, and no one has been able to get it from them. But whoever cap-

tures it, and takes it from the blind women, will have the daughter of Itakempka, the beautiful Etanda, for his wife.”

At these words off started Ithenthiela, and, traveling hard, he soon came to a tepee which stood alone; the home of the two old blind women.

Dull and gloomy was the covering of the wigwam; but from the tiny hole in the smoke-begrimed moose skins came a strange, bright light at which Ithenthiela marveled.

But when he entered he saw what it was that gave the mysterious light. It came from the great medicine belt which hung upon the wall, and surrounding the belt were the skulls of many men.

The belt was studded with gems. From great rubies sparkled the rays of crimson; from huge amethysts shone streams of purple; from mighty sapphires came the deepest blue, and gorgeous emeralds shot rays of green; while great cairngorms scintillated with yellow glow. The lights changed from blood-red to purple, from purple to blue, from blue to green, from green to yellow, and ever and anon faded altogether, to be succeeded by the mixed rainbow of color from fair opals

or by the pure white light of great diamonds. This was the magic belt of Itakempka.

The blind women bade Ithenthiela welcome and said to him:

“Tell us, Ithenthiela, when you are about to leave, so that we may bid you good-by.”

Now, Ithenthiela had noticed that each of the old women had behind her back a knife of copper, long and sharp and gleaming; and that one sat on either side of the door, waiting.

“Ah!” thought he, “when I leave they mean to kill me. But, I shall fool them.”

In one part of the wigwam lay a muskamoot, or bag, of bones and feathers. To this he tied a string, which he pulled over the pole above the door. Then, said he:

“I am going now, Blind Women. Remember that I am old and fat, and when I leave I make much noise.”

With this he pulled the string, whereat the bag of bones and feathers trundled toward the door. Immediately the two old hags stabbed; but striking only feathers, the long knife of each passed through the bag into the body of the other, and both were killed.

Then Ithenthiela took the precious belt

and hastened with all speed toward the wigwam of Itakempka. As he neared the great Chief's home he heard no sound of man or beast. Entering, he saw that all the camp was sleeping. Around the long-cold fire lay the warriors and maidens, the old men and women, and in their midst the tall Chief, decked with faded plumes.

Then for the first time, Ithenthiela drew from beneath his leathern shirt the belt of medicine. Around the wigwam flashed the rays of red, purple, green, and gold. Instantly the warriors and maidens, the old men and women, awoke. Up rose the Chief, fine and stately among them, as the color came back to his gorgeous headdress, and as the fire on the hearth sparkled into life.

Then said Ithenthiela: "Great Chief, be you happy now. I have brought you back your healing belt, the band of life, of hope, of war, and of peace. Henceforth it shall abide here in its true place with you."

Then said Itakempka: "Greatly I rejoice, O Ithenthiela! You have saved my people. Now shall the sun shine again. Now shall musk-oxen, caribou, moose, and bears live once more in our country. Again shall we see

the smoke of many wigwams. Once more shall we hear the voice of many hunters, and ever and anon the war-whoop of the warriors. You have wakened us from our long winter sleep. Take you now my daughter, the fair Etanda, for your wife. But leave me not. You shall stay with me, and be a great chief after me." So Ithenthiela remained in the shining white home of Itakempka.

And still the Red Children in the distant northern lands tell of Ithenthiela when the northern lights flit across the sky.

"Ah!" they cry, with their faces bowed before that splendid light, which is to them the most mysterious thing of nature. "See the fingers of Ithenthiela are beckoning us to the home which he found for us beyond the sky."

CHAPTER VII

Myth and Hero Tale

THE world is a wonder-palace to the child. "Everything hints at something more magical and more marvelous which is to come." The inanimate objects about him are given living attributes; animals and flowers are endowed by his fancy with human thought and feeling. He talks to the clouds and the stars; he peoples the sky with living inhabitants; to him the winds are not "forces of nature"; they are boisterous companions or gentle friends.

This applies to the imaginative child, and there are more imaginative children than the most of us suspect. The imagination may be suppressed by older and "wiser" companions, or natural shyness may cause the imaginative fancies to remain unvoiced; but the fancies are there—bubbling over in fantastic follies or childish imagery, or kept in those hidden chambers of the soul to which grown-ups are forbidden entrance.

Because of this mental attitude, children are inherent myth-makers. And to the same mental attitude upon the part of the children of the race, is due the fund of mythological lore which has enriched the world's literature and inspired much of its art.

To this rich store, then, the child may be introduced by means of mythological stories. Their appeal is strong because they are in harmony with his own spontaneous interests. Froebel says: "Would'st thou know how to teach the child? Observe him, and he will show you what to do." If, then, the child so loves the myth, let us hold him and help him by means of the mythological story. Those which contain an objectionable element may readily be withheld; there are plenty which are beautiful in their form and true in their teaching.

The myth, strictly speaking, differs from the fairy story in that it personifies the forces and manifestations of nature: Aurora awakening the sleeping world with her shafts of light; Ceres presiding over the harvests of golden grain; Jove hurling the dreadful thunderbolts; and Narcissus living in the beautiful blossom which bears his name.

Few children will accept these stories as absolute statements of fact, nor need they be so presented. Whatever this personification of the universal elements may have meant to the ancient Greeks, to us it is purely imaginary; it is the fairy-land of nature. Children love to "make believe," and their own personifications of the forces of nature, while spontaneous and vivid, are a part of their imaginative world—a part of their "make believe." So, mythological stories are never accepted by them upon the literal plane of the true nature story, nor should they ever be so presented. When stories of the ancient gods and goddesses are told, they may be very briefly outlined as the imaginative stories of an ancient race. This will give them their true place, without in the least detracting from their charm.

The child who is made familiar with the old mythology by means of stories and verse, holds the key of understanding to the countless allusions of the world's best literature. He may not comprehend the deeper meaning, nor understand that they were the religion of an ancient people, but when in his later reading of some masterpiece of poetry or prose he

finds an allusion to Phaeton, to Apollo, or to Neptune, he will experience the same delight that comes to one who meets an old play-fellow in a foreign land.

The Hero-Tale

As the child creates a world of fancy and, when left to himself, lives within it, so marvelous deeds and achievements are to him as the daily breath of our own lives. He imagines himself the hero of such wonderful and impossible adventures that when he is told of Phaeton and his mad ride, he accepts it with the same calm appreciation which is accorded the imaginings of his own creative moods. The slaying of the Gorgon is fully in harmony with his own future plans. Not that he believes in these hero tales literally, or comprehends their deeper significance, but they fit in so perfectly with his normal habit of creative fancy that they seem to him as his very own, and he loves them.

The hero-tale appeals as strongly to the child as does the myth—probably more strongly to the boy. Indeed, the myth and hero-tale are often one, for Greek and Norse mythology abound in heroes and heroic ad-

ventures, and the lad who pores breathlessly over the thrilling experiences of a Captain Kidd, would find equal delight in the story of the Wooden Horse and the Fall of Troy, were it told him in a manner suited to his age and understanding.

The story of Arion, returning victorious from the great musical contest, and threatened by the mutinous seamen of his vessel, stirs any boy to enthusiasm, as do the adventures of Perseus, who, helped by Minerva and Mercury, slew the Gorgon, Medusa.

In another field there are the merry tales of Robin Hood, the outlaw beloved of boys, with his host of adventurous followers; and the chivalrous deeds of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. Stories of the knights appeal to universal boyhood. Well do I remember a story hour in which the compact body of the audience was fringed all about with boys under whose arms were shoe-blackening kits, or bundles of newspapers. They dodged in for a story, and out again for a customer, but with one voice they demanded—it was not a request —“ Give us a knight story! Give us a knight story!”

Boys can be kept from reading worthless

fiction if books and stories of the right sort are placed in their hands, and the surest way to make these attractive is to give them the contents or a part of the contents in story form first. Make the stories vivid, give them plenty of life and action, and Captain Kidd or Bunco Bill will pale before King Arthur and Ulysses.

The younger children will listen with greatest delight to stories of imaginary heroes, such as abound in folk-lore and myth—Jack the Giant Killer easily leading in favor, as has been proven by statistics.

Children demand definite aims, swift action, prompt reward of the good, and punishment of the evil. They do not understand complex motives nor the slow working out of nature's retribution. This comes with later years. The story-teller must choose her subjects in accordance with the age of the child. The world of fancy gradually gives way before the world of fact, and there comes a time when the heroes of the myth and the fairy tale are received with a certain degree of scorn. They are "out-grown." At this period the boy and girl demand heroes of flesh and blood; men who "do and dare"

especially appeal to them. There must still be rapid action and swift retribution or reward, but motives begin to be understood more fully, and little by little these motives begin to be less self-centered; they touch an ever-broadening circle.

To follow this circle and select stories which fit its circumference should be the aim of mother and teacher. Here, as everywhere in teaching, the "spontaneous interests" furnish the key for selection.

The range of hero-tales is wide. Among them are the mythological and folk-lore tales previously suggested; the legendary hero-tales which are partly fact and partly fancy, such as the *Knights of the Round Table*, *Robin Hood*, and most of the medieval stories; and Bible stories, among which there are a host of heroic characters, whose *moral* heroism should be made the dominant note.

There are also the heroes who have traveled, explored, and dared in the interests of science, and those who have endured hardship and privation in order to carry civilization to the dark corners of the globe. There are heroes also, often unknown, who risk

their lives almost daily to carry on the mechanical processes of modern civilization. Any of these will form the nucleus of stories of thrilling interest to the growing boy and girl. Let the motive for the heroic deed be felt throughout the story. Do not tack it on as a moral; let it permeate the whole narrative. It has been truly said that "To add a moral application to a story is as complete a confession of failure as to append an explanation to a joke."

The material for hero-tales lies all about us—upon the pages of the newspaper and the magazine, as well as between the covers of the Iliad and the Odyssey.

Give the boy and girl stories "clean in the warp and woof"; stories of brave, noble men and women, worthy of emulation, for "with the great, one's thoughts and manners easily become great."

The following story of "The Coming of Arthur" from *Some Great Stories and How to Tell Them* (Newson and Company), by Richard Thomas Wyche, founder of The Story-Tellers' League, is one of the best examples known to the author of the sort of hero or knight story which all boys love, and

which will lead them into the realms of the best and purest literature.

The Coming of Arthur*

One dark stormy night a long time ago, in a land beyond the seas, old King Uther lay upon his bed dying. He was weeping and lamenting, not so much because he was leaving this world, as because he had no son or daughter to come after him and rule England. There were two old men who stood near the king, whose names were Bleys and Merlin. When they saw that their king was silent in death, they passed out into the black night and walked down toward the ocean where the great waves came rolling in from the deep.

The night was stormy, and they noticed that the waves grew larger and larger. They counted them—one, two, three, up to the ninth—which seemed to gather half the sea. Suddenly, on the highest crest of this wave, they saw a shining ship in the form of a dragon, and all from stem to stern the deck was covered with shining people. No sooner had they seen the ship than it disappeared. But nevertheless this great wave came rolling in

* By permission of the author, and publishers.

and tumbled at their feet. Strange to say out of this wave there rolled a little naked child, and Merlin picked it up and cried, "The King! The King! An heir for Uther!" Then the long wave swept up the beach, wrapped about the old man and flashed like fire. After which there was a calm, and the stars came out, and the elves and fairies blew their horns from cliff to cliff.

Merlin gave the little child to an old woman to nurse. He was given the name of Arthur, and as the years passed by he grew into a beautiful boy with blue eyes and golden hair. Merlin, who was a very wise old man, became the boy's teacher.

But let me tell you a story about the boy. One day, as Arthur was walking out all alone in the sunny fields, he came upon a little girl sitting upon a bank of heath, weeping as if her heart would break, and saying: "I hate this fair world and all that's in it." She had been beaten for a fault of which she was not guilty. When she looked up there stood the boy, Arthur. Whether he could walk unseen like his old teacher Merlin, who was something of a wizard, she did not know, but there he stood smiling at her. He dried her tears,

comforted her heart, and was a child with her. But one day after that when she saw him again he was so dignified and cold she was afraid of him. But again when she saw him his ways were sweet and they played as children together. They were golden hours for her and for him. She said then, "Some day he will be King."

As Arthur grew into manhood he wanted a sword, as all boys did in those days. One summer day he was in his boat on the lake. All around him spread the shining water, above him bent the sky, soft and blue. He moved to the center of the lake and stopped. It was noon, and he sat thinking. Perhaps he was wondering what he would do when he became a man. Suddenly he heard the water ripple, and near by he saw, rising from the lake a white arm and hand holding a sword. Arthur reached out and took the sword and then the hand disappeared.

The hilt of the sword was in the shape of a cross, studded with jewels that sparkled and flashed. He pulled it from the scabbard and the blade was so bright that it hurt his eye to look at it. On one side of the blade he saw cut in the steel in the oldest language

of all the world, the words, "Take me," but on the other side, in the language of the people, "Cast me away." It made him sad to think he must cast it away. He took it to his old teacher Merlin, who was then a hundred winters old. Merlin said: "'Take me' means that you must take the sword, clear the forest, let in the light and make broad pathways for the hunter and the knight; break up the robber bands and bandit holds; drive back the heathen that come swarming over the seas, burning the houses and killing the people." Then he whispered into Arthur's ear and said: "Some day you may be king. After you have ruled the land and made it better, the time will come when you may cast the sword away, but that is a long way off."

The years passed. Not since the dark stormy night on which King Uther died had there been a strong ruler in England. The people fought among themselves. The heathen came swarming over the seas; the wild animals came from the woods and carried off the children. The land was going to ruin. One day the people came together and said: "We must make one man king."

Whom do you suppose they crowned? Merlin, with his knowledge and power, had Arthur lifted up and put on the throne. Many believed he was the rightful king, but others said: "Away with him, he is no king of ours, he is base-born." But then Arthur spoke to the people in the hall, and asked all the young men who would help him rule the land to come forward. Many heard his manly voice and came and stood before him. He said to them: "Will you speak the truth; be pure; right the wrong; be strong, yet gentle; be true in love; obey the king and your conscience?" When they said "yes," they kneeled before him, and he made them his knights. When they arose from the knight-ing, he spoke to them in a low deep voice of authority and told them that he wished to make a good king, and that he wanted them to rule the land and make the world better, and the people happier.

While he stood speaking to them, for a moment every man seemed to favor the king; their faces were radiant. Then suddenly three rays of light fell as if from heaven, and lit up the faces of three tall queens, who stood near the throne to help the king

at his need. Near him stood his old teacher Merlin, and the Lady of the Lake who, it was said, made and gave him Excalibur, the wonderful sword. After that, other young men came and took the vows of knighthood, until there were hundreds of knights. They were called Knights of the Round Table.

Then King Arthur went against the heathen, and in twelve great battles drove the last one from the country. One day, as he was passing with his army through the streets of a village, he saw, standing by a castle wall, a beautiful young woman. He did not know her, nor did she know him; for Arthur was clad simply as one of his knights, and not in his kingly robes. Arthur could not forget the face. He was in love with the young woman, and wanted to make her his wife and queen. When he returned to his palace, he called Sir Bedivere and two other knights, and sent them to search for the young woman.

The young woman's name was Guinevere, called the pearl of beauty, and her father was an old king, Leodogran, King of Camelaird. When the knights stood before him, and said, "King Arthur wishes Guinevere to be his

wife and queen," the old man spoke roughly to them, and said, "Who is Arthur, that I should give my daughter in marriage to him? He is base-born, and not the son of a king. Even though he has helped me in battle, how can I, being a king, give my daughter in marriage to a man that is not a king, or the son of a king?"

When Leodogran was persuaded to make further inquiries, and heard of Arthur's birth and boyhood, of the wonderful sword Excalibur, of the three rays of light at his coronation, and of his pure life and great deeds, he still doubted.

He sat upon his seat and actually nodded, napped, and kept the knights waiting. But while he napped, he dreamed, and in his dream saw a great battlefield starting at his feet and sloping away as far as the eye could reach. On this field armies were passing and moving. Arthur, the newly crowned king, with his army, was victorious and glorious. When Leodogran woke up, he called the knights and said: "Yes, Guinevere, my daughter, may go."

Some time after that, King Arthur called Sir Lancelot, his best knight and warrior,

and sent him to bring the Queen-to-be to his palace. Sir Lancelot and the other knights with him rode away on horseback, while King Arthur stood and watched them from the gates as they disappeared. Guinevere was ready and came with Sir Lancelot. It was the first of May, when the earth was white with hyacinths. The woods were all abloom and seemed full of singing birds. Guinevere rode on horseback by Sir Lancelot. Each day couriers went before and pitched a tent where the Queen-to-be might rest at noon. The journey was soon at an end. Sir Lancelot had entertained Guinevere with talk of the tourney, the chase, the hunt, and of King Arthur and his noble deeds. Sir Lancelot was so strong, yet gentle and tender, that she could not help but like him, and love him. When King Arthur came out to meet her, clad in his kingly robes, he seemed so tall and dignified that she felt a little afraid of him. But she knew that she was to be his wife and queen. Straightway they went to the church, and there before the highest of altar shrines, the bishop made them man and wife, and blessed them. Then as they went from the church King Arthur's Knights, clad in stain-

less white, marched before him with trumpets and a song:

Blow trumpet, for the world is white with May!

Blow trumpet, the long night hath rolled away!

Blow thro' the living world, "Let the King reign!'

And that was the coming of King Arthur.

CHAPTER VIII

Holiday and Vacation Stories

STORIES fitted to the holiday seasons, and the out-door stories of vacation time are always a source of delight to both storyteller and listeners. Each holiday has its quota of timely stories; and by no other means can the spirit and the lesson of a special day or season be more vividly impressed upon a child's mind than by a well-chosen, well-told story. Many mothers and teachers understand this, and a still larger number would find undreamed-of pleasure and resultant good in a practical test of the statement.

The spirit of Thanksgiving may be made active in the child and a lasting impetus for good imparted through stories which are strong, and full of the Thanksgiving atmosphere.

The same is true of stories pertaining to Christmas, to New Year's, to Washington's and Lincoln's Birthdays, to Memorial Day,

and to all other days that are generally observed, and whose lessons teachers are expected to impress.

In making up special day programs, if teachers will devote one number to a good, strong story, appropriate to the occasion, it will prove not only one of the most interesting features of the day, but the one which will make the most lasting impression. This applies to the higher grades even more emphatically than to the lower grades where stories are more frequently told, and are, in consequence, less of a treat and an innovation.

Vacation Stories

After the first few blissful days of vacation idleness, children of school age begin to grow restless, and are ready for occupation or entertainment. This natural desire opens up a useful and delightful occupation for teachers, or for others who are interested in children and capable of telling them stories in a fascinating way. This consists of a series of "story hours in the open" which may be arranged for the summer months. The work should be planned systematically,

with a definite object in view for each series, and with special regard to grouping children of the same approximate age.

One series may be made up of stories of out-door mythology, or fairy tales dealing with out-door life. They may be told upon a lawn or in some park, with the children seated upon the grass in informal groups, and the story-teller in their midst. The out-door environment will give the children a sense of participation in the events of the story which cannot be gained within four walls.

A park or a bit of natural woods makes an ideal setting for a series of Robin Hood tales, or for tales of chivalry. The boys and girls will people the woods about them with the characters of the story, and the tales they hear under such conditions will not be easily effaced.

Excursions to parks, or near-by lakes, or woods, seem an almost necessary accompaniment to stories of the trees, the birds, the wild life of the floral and the animal world. Material for such stories is abundant. There are the works of John Burroughs, Olive Thorne Miller, Dr. Long, Kipling, Thompson-

Seton, and Charles G. D. Roberts, with a host of others which any library or book store can furnish.

Boys and girls will show a vital interest in stories of local history, if the stories are not thus labeled.

The early history of the region in which they live, the struggles, experiences, and adventures of the early explorers of the territory surrounding their own home, may be made intensely interesting; and if the group of listeners can be taken to the spot which forms the setting of the story, the bit of history becomes most vital and real.

This plan of out-door story-telling combines the benefits of the usual vacation activities with the legitimate good of the story hour as conducted in our libraries during the winter months.

Stories of industry, and of the development of a given line of commerce or manufacture are full of interest for boys especially. These may be told in connection with the leading business interests of the city or community in which the stories are given.

Every state, every city, affords story material which may be so cast as to rival the

wonders of Aladdin's lamp. These stories are not, as a rule, ready-made. They require study, research, preparation, but the warp and the woof are there, ready at hand in the records which any state or city library holds, and it remains for the story-teller so to weave the fabric of her story that it shall attract the fancy and stir the imagination. It need not be a literary masterpiece, but it must have life and action; it must tell of difficulties overcome, with a triumphant ending of final achievement.

CHAPTER IX

Bible Stories

OF ALL the stories that we may tell our children, first in importance are the stories of the Bible. During the early years, when the most lasting impressions are made, when faith is simple, when the thought of God's presence and love is natural, the Bible stories should be told over and over again.

There should be no attempt at this time to interpret the stories or to bring out theological questions. The stories should be told in all their original simplicity, using as far as possible the Bible language, which is brief, strong, picturesque. No possible improvement could be made over the wording of the Creation Story as told in the first chapter of Genesis and the first three verses of the second chapter. The children will not tire of its telling, and it should become as familiar to them as are their nursery rhymes. The shame is upon us as fathers and mothers that this is so seldom the case.

The story of the flood, divided into its four parts, as given in the collected stories of this book, should be made equally familiar to the children. A comparison of these stories with the Bible narrative will show that the original language has been retained, and only such detail and repetition as would confuse the little child, have been omitted. The literary style is unchanged.

In these stories there is all the charm of the folk-tale with its simple directness of style, its rapid action, its repetition of words and phrases, such as "every living thing, of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing," yet it is lifted far above the folk-tale by the all-pervading thought of God acting in righteousness.

No Bible story is worthily told which does not touch the underlying truth of the beauty of holiness, and the folly and inevitable consequences of sin. In preparing Bible stories for telling, the story-teller should have always in mind what has been called the "basic principle of both Old and New Testaments"—the perfect God desiring to restore man "to holiness and true communion with Himself." But this truth should be inherent in

the story, and not presented in the form of an appended moral.

As to the manner of telling: a Bible story should be narrated with the spontaneous life that is accorded the telling of any other story. Too often, through an effort upon the part of the conscientious story-teller to impress their religious nature, to communicate to the child a feeling of awe, the Bible stories are told in a truly *awful* manner, and the child, without knowing why, learns to dread them. They have been made to him something unreal, something which he cannot understand, which he fears. This is the last result that the story-teller has desired, but it is the inevitable result when sanctimoniousness is substituted for the "love, joy, and gentleness" which are among the fruits of the Spirit, and which must fashion the telling of the Bible stories.

Rightly told, the Bible stories arouse in the child the keenest interest and the deepest pleasure. What child, after hearing the story of Joseph—the child who dreamed dreams and who wore the marvelous coat of many colors—being sold into bondage to the Midianites by his brethren, will not want to

hear "what happened next?" And what story is more beautiful, more filled with wonders and marvels, with love, and forgiveness, and moral steadfastness, than the story of Joseph? It is quite as fascinating as any tale from the Arabian Nights, and it excels the latter a thousand-fold in its fundamental value, for these Old Testament stories eclipse the myth and the hero-tale not only in their genuine interest for the child, but because they bring him into conscious relationship with God—the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; the God whose throne is for ever and ever, and the sceptre of whose kingdom is the sceptre of *righteousness*.

It is possible here to give only the briefest outline of the various kinds of stories which one may choose from this wealth of material. There are the wonder stories of the creation, the Garden of Eden, the flood, in the first part of the book of Genesis; the patriarch stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, in the latter part of the same book; the story of Moses, and all the wonders of the Exodus; the stories of the prophets, of Joshua, Samuel, Daniel; the hero-stories of Samson, of David's encounter with Goliath;

of Gideon; the pastoral story of Ruth. In the New Testament are the stories of Christ's birth, His life, with all its boyhood incidents, its parables, and its wonders, closing with His death and resurrection. The question is not, "What can I tell?" but, "Which shall I tell?" The fund is practically inexhaustible.

I have a word of caution to offer to the one—be she mother, Sunday School teacher, or story-teller, who presents Bible stories to children: put nothing into the stories by way of explanation which the Bible does not put there, and which will have to be recalled or modified when the child grows older and begins to ask questions, and to this end do not make the mistake of confounding the truth taught, with the literal form of its teaching.

As the child grows older and begins to analyze, to reason, and to ask questions, then must the story-teller—and let us hope that the chief Bible story-teller may be the mother—be ready to guide surely and unfold wisely the deeper and higher meaning of the stories of the Book of Books.

CHAPTER X

Systematic Story-Telling

THE thought that literature is a growth; that it had its infancy, and its periods of development through succeeding ages; that the different periods are related to each other and spring from one another, is too often ignored in the study and in the teaching of the subject.

Not only the average child, but the great majority of children—if not of adults—look upon literature as a great heap of miscellany; a vast array of unrelated writings. Few grasp the idea that “literature is the evolution of the thought of humanity”; that it had its beginning in the myth-making ages, was further developed by the Greeks and then by the Latin races; that after the time of Christ there was the distinctive literature of the chivalric period, followed by the development of Chaucer’s time, of Shakespeare’s, up to and including that of the present age. Each of these periods has its many

subdivisions, but each is the outgrowth of the preceding.

The story-teller who has grasped even the simplest outlines of literary development will be able to present to the children a sequence of stories which shall, dimly at first, but more and more clearly as time goes on, enable them to look at the literature of the world as a related whole. This is, of course, the privilege only of the mother, or of the teacher who is in daily contact with the same pupils for an extended length of time. It cannot be done by the occasional story-teller.

As ocular demonstration produces the most lasting impression, the best method of fixing this idea of development is by means of diagrams made up in the simplest manner possible. If no blackboard is available, a paper chain will answer the purpose, its few, large links representing the literary periods. Suggestions for diagrams or charts suited to all grades, and to children of all ages, are given in Miss M. E. Burt's concise but comprehensive book *Literary Landmarks* (Houghton, Mifflin Company) — a book which every teacher should read.

The simplest chart of all consists of a

straight line drawn horizontally, in the middle of which is a cross, representing the time of Christ. The portion of the line to the left indicates the time before Christ; that to the right, the time since Christ. Present day stories may be shown as belonging to the right hand portion of the chart, New Testament stories to the middle portion, and the myth to the left hand. A very few words of explanation will suffice to make plain the meaning of the chart as giving the relative time of the story's origin. Then proceed to tell the story as usual.

The first story in a series planned along these lines, may well be one of the earliest myths, that of Phaeton, or of Vulcan, illustrating the earliest conception of the phenomenon of light and of fire. The Indian myth, giving the origin of fire as conceived by the North American Indian, should also be told, and located on the right hand side of the chart.

The story of Cupid can be traced from its origin in the old time myth, through Greek literature and on into modern poems and prose, thus showing how the original thought of the myth-making period grows into new

forms and new beauty in the literature of later periods.

Miss Burt sets forth clearly the use of the diagram or chart in the teaching of literature. It can be used with equal success and to as great advantage by the story-teller who gives a related series of stories from different periods of time. Grade teachers can make the chart serve its original purpose in the teaching of literature, and in story-telling can place the story in a brief word or two which shall give it a place, or a relationship to literature. This makes the story of greater value, through helping the child to assemble his literary landmarks.

The mother who follows this method of story-telling in the home, selecting her stories from the best that literature affords, and grouping or placing them according to the period to which each belongs, will find as great delight and profit in the task, as will the children in the stories themselves. To many a mother, and teacher as well, it will prove a new viewpoint from which to study literature, while meeting the child's desire for stories in more than aimless fashion.

The historical outline of a nation's prog-

ress can be given by means of stories told in sequence. These stories should follow a chronological plan which can be as readily developed by means of a chart as can the periods of literature. The outline should be a very simple one at first, dividing the history into a few main periods of development, and telling stories characteristic of the divisions of time. Later these main periods may be subdivided, and new stories told of prominent characters or events, until a fairly comprehensive view of the history as a whole has been acquired.

Mothers who fear that the home duties and the rearing of children will cause them to drop behind the times, or to become out of date in their mental equipment, need have no fear of the children outstripping them if they will prepare themselves with a good outline of literature and of history, and follow these in the stories they tell their children. Such outlines may be found at any good library.

Mythology and chivalry may be knitted into the hose and mittens of the little people; fairy tales may be hemmed into the dainty garments; and deeds of heroism mixed with the custard and the rolls, thus clothing and

building up discriminating minds to fit strong and rugged bodies.

To mothers, as to teachers, I would most heartily recommend Miss Burt's book already mentioned, for it is full of suggestive outlines which may be simplified or modified to meet any existing need, while it gives a wide range of books from which stories may be chosen to fill the outlines.

Another source of help to which too few mothers have recourse is to be found in the modern "children's librarian." Since story-telling has been made so important a feature of library work in the children's department, the subject has been given close study, lists have been compiled, and special outlines prepared. Librarians are eager to extend these helps to mothers who may thus be saved the time which would otherwise be required for individual research.

CHAPTER XI

The Joy of Story-Telling

DID you ever drop down upon a somewhat sleepy village where recreations and amusements are almost unknown, and there gather the children together and give them a story hour?

They come with wonder, even with suspicion that you have some ulterior object as yet undisclosed, and they file in and eye you askance.

And then you begin to tell the stories—animal stories, for all children love those; a story from the Bible which reveals to them the fact that there are as great heroes among the Bible characters as are to be found in secular history; a tale of chivalry which stirs the boys; and then perhaps a dialect story from Uncle Remus;—and as you tell the stories the suspicious look vanishes; the clear eyes before you look straight into yours; then there creeps into them a brightness, an eagerness for more; then comes the ripple of

merriment; a spontaneous ring of laughter; and then the plea, "One more, oh, please, *one more!*"

When you have done this; when you have won to you the shy children of a whole village, then you know the pure joy of story-telling.

There is nothing better worth winning than the love of a child, and there is no surer way of reaching a child's heart than through the story.

The Story Hour

Story-telling may be made a serious matter as to its purpose, but it should never be a serious matter as to its presentation. Whatever its purpose, the story itself must be a source of joy to the hearer, or its purpose fails. The lesson to be taught, whether moral or educational, fails in its object if the story itself be irksome or stupid.

Conscientious teachers, feeling the weight of argument against them, and taking up the *task* of story-telling as an added obligation of schoolroom duty, wonder why the results are not what the evidence of other story-tellers had led them to believe. Story-telling,

as a duty, unlightened and unbrightened by a genuine love of the story and an eagerness for the joy it is to bring to the listeners, can never prove a success.

The story-teller must enter with all her heart and all her enthusiasm into the life and beauty of the story she is telling, in order to achieve the best results. Without this she cannot win the response of her hearers, nor reap the reward which should be her own.

It is in the story hour that the true story-teller comes into her kingdom. Here she is free to give to the expectant hearers just the tale which they love to hear. She is not bound by rules or regulations, by systems or courses, but may follow the promptings of her intuition and sway her small auditors at her will.

Here the rig-ma-role story may find its proper place and delight by its whimsical nonsense; the tale of chivalry, the story of brave achievement, or of loyalty of purpose, may be made to stir her hearers; the dialect story—which the children seldom read but love to hear—may lend its quaint charm; or the nonsense tale may be used as the safety

valve for bubbling emotions. Varied in character as the stories may be, each is permeated by the truest, purest joy in the telling—be it the classical story of the “ Wooden Horse ” and the “ Fall of Troy,” or the nursery tale of the “ Little Small Rid Hin ” and the fall of “ Reynard the Fox.”

Thus may we win the hearts and the confidence of the children, and having won these, we may lead them whithersoever we will. And so, with Kate Douglas Wiggin, I can truly say: “ I would rather be the children’s story-teller than the queen’s favorite or the king’s counsellor.”

CHAPTER XII

Story-Telling as an Art

THE artist in colors works out his conception of a picture upon canvas. It is finished, and he steps aside. Personally he has nothing further to do with the presentation of that picture. But if his own individuality has not entered into the work, if something of himself has not permeated it, it can never be a work of true art.

The story-teller also presents a picture—a word picture—and, like that of the artist of the brush, if her own individuality has not entered into it, if something of herself has not permeated it, it can not be true art. But, unlike the painter, her picture is never completed; she is never able to step aside and say, “It is finished.” And here the story-teller has the advantage of the painter, for each re-telling of her story is a new presentation, and in each re-telling her own personality may lend a deeper pathos, a rarer glint of humor, a more searching vision of truth.

The story itself is the picture; its theme forms the subject; its literary quality corresponds to canvas and color. Hence a story, to be artistically told, must be well chosen. In its inherent character it must awaken the imagination; it must satisfy the love of beauty; it must mirror truth; and it must appeal to both the intellect and the emotion.

Art's chief charm lies in its power to awaken the imagination, to stir the fancy, to suggest something above and beyond the actual portrayal. The subject of artistic story-telling must always be beautiful, but there are many types of beauty, many forms and fancies which appeal to our aesthetic sense. Again, no story which is not painted against "a universal background of truth" can be artistic, for truth, not error, is beautiful. Finally, a story, to be great, must of necessity appeal to the intellect; but if its appeal be to the intellect alone, it is cold and formal. It must touch the emotions as well: it must have a human interest.

Every well-told story, as every gem from the artist's brush, must have atmosphere—that indefinable something which casts its glamour over the whole. In story-telling, this

sense of atmosphere must come from the personality of the teller. That is why there is such a variety of charm in hearing the same story told by different persons. This sense of atmosphere is created by the story-teller's losing herself wholly in the story. She completely absorbs the story, its setting, its characters, its ideals, and when she gives it forth again, it takes on something of herself. This cannot be the case if the story is told as something assumed, external, or borrowed. In the latter, no matter how good the technique, the art is lost. Perhaps this point, which is most essential to artistic story-telling, may be more deeply impressed by a concrete example:

The story-lovers of one of our large cities recently had the pleasure of listening to two well-known story-tellers, each giving an hour with Uncle Remus. Only a few days elapsed between the two presentations. In the first instance the story-teller had scarcely more than commenced when we felt that we were sitting in Uncle Remus' cabin, away down South, listening to the adventures of Brer Wolf, Brer Fox, and Brer Rabbit, told by the old man who loved them as his own brothers of the woods. *We were* the little boy, to

whom Uncle Remus was telling the stories in his own inimitable way.

In the second instance we were an audience in the North, listening to a well-told—a thoroughly well-told—account of Uncle Remus' telling to a little boy the adventures of Brer Wolf, Brer Fox, and Brer Rabbit. We laughed with the little boy; we enjoyed it with the little boy, but we ourselves were not that little boy sitting at the feet of Uncle Remus.

Do you see the contrast? The first storyteller created the true "Uncle Remus atmosphere"; his story-telling was an art.

What was the difference in the telling? It was very simple. The one became Uncle Remus in spirit. In all conscious simplicity he *was* the old colored story-teller whom Joel Chandler Harris created, and he was telling his story to the little boy—not to an "audience." The other told us—most delightfully—*about* the old colored story-teller, and reproduced for us his stories. His technique was above reproach, and he satisfied the intellect. The first also satisfied the intellect, but he reached far beyond it and touched the heart.

The artistic story must have perspective. One which lacks this quality is like a diagram; it is not a picture. There must be relative values, and the "witching glamour of the past." Give the old stories their appropriate setting in time and place. Let the modern story be the central figure against the universal background of truth—a background which will soften its sharper outlines, and mellow its cruder tones. Preserve in the classic the classical spirit, as well as the classical form—that classical spirit which kindles the fancy and stirs the imagination. Let the hearers see their heroes through the vista of vanishing years.

Technique is a necessary part of any artistic production. Note how carefully the artist selects his brushes and prepares his palette. The story-teller should do no less. As the brush of the artist must, to a certain extent, influence the effect of his colors, so the voice and manner of the story-teller must, to a certain degree, affect the presentation of the story. Even the manner of dress has its influence. And so, with the example of the artist before us, let us choose these minor tools of our art with the single purpose of

their suitability. Let them be natural, simple, harmonious. No judge of a picture thinks of the canvas or the pigments. They are wholly lost sight of. So will it be with the elements of the story-teller's equipment if they are suitable; in other words, if they are in harmony with her real purpose. But let us also bear in mind the fact that a true artist can do much with a poor brush, and the true story-teller can achieve good results even though the details of her equipment are not at their best.

There must be variety in the story-pictures. No one cares to look continually at the paintings of even the greatest master, be he a Michael Angelo, or a Velasquez. The water colors of a Turner, or even the vagaries of a Whistler afford needed change and variety — each arousing our admiration, each presenting its own phase of art. So we need not always tell the stories of a Homer or a Shakespeare. These may well be interspersed with the tales of an Anderson, a Dickens, or a Joel Chandler Harris.

There is an "indefinite something" about art which raises it above the commonplace. Perfection of craftsmanship does not produce

this indescribable charm. It must emanate from the personality of the worker.

Let us never confuse art with artificiality. Art is nothing assumed; it is something felt. Until we feel our story we can never tell it at its best.

Not all are artists, few are great artists; but you and I may do our best toward artistic attainment, and comfort ourselves over any lack of achievement by the reflection that while only the favored few see the great masterpieces of painting, the lives of the multitude are made brighter and happier by the work of the lesser artists, who, striving against their limitations, have yet given to the world their best.

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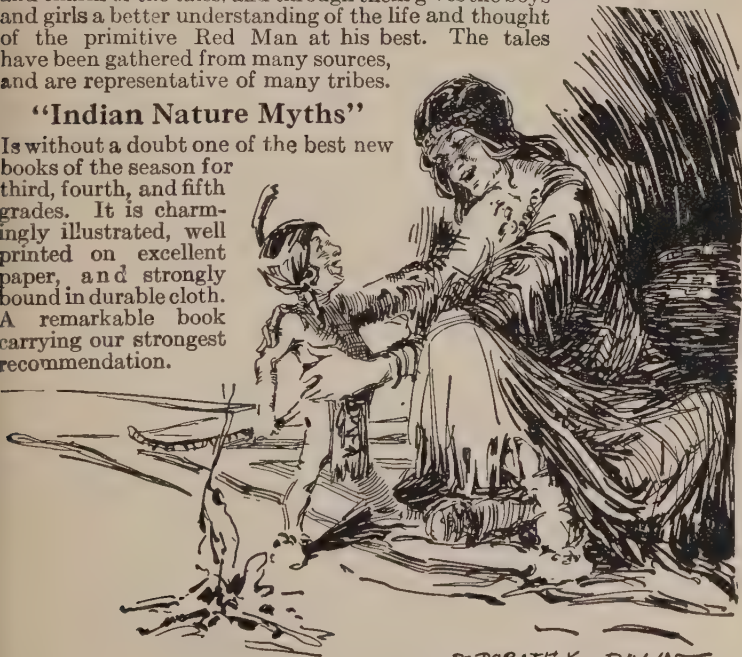
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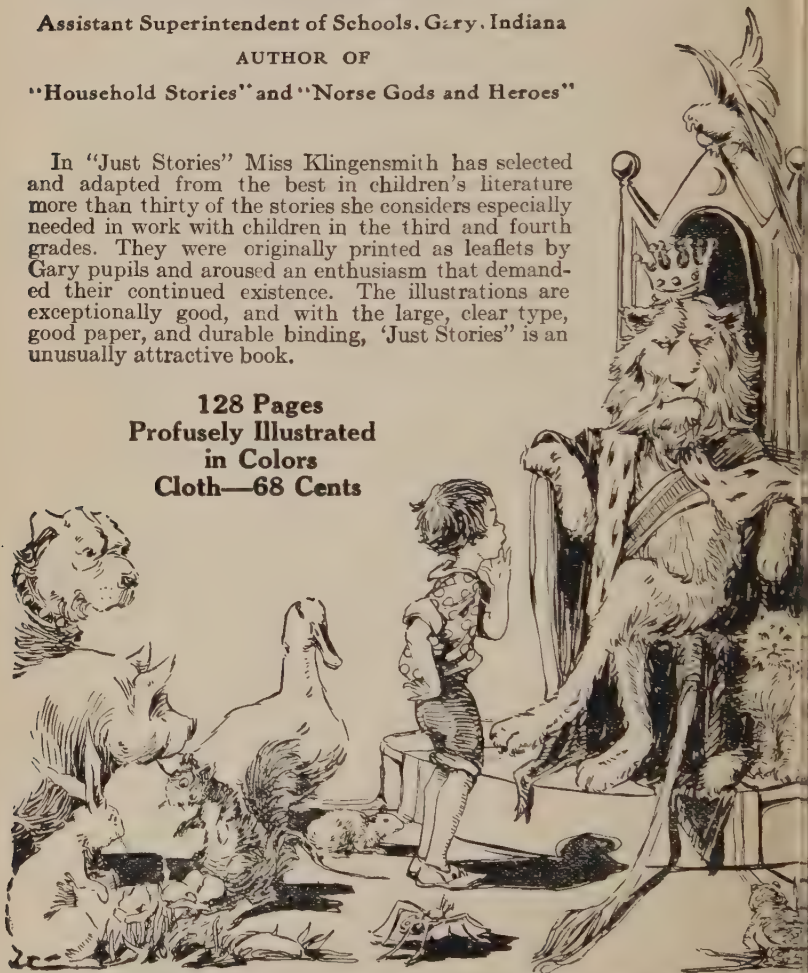
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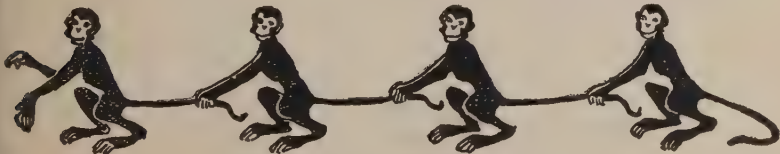
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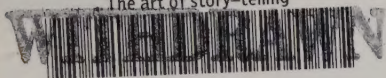
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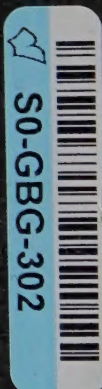
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